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INTELLIGENCE AND INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

for

DHP P 217: Seminar on Crisis Management

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20 Mar 1995

Professor Pfaltzgraff

This paper fulfills the requirements for the MA Degree  
and DHP P 217: Seminar on Crisis Management

# ABSTRACT

Kevin D. Halpin, Captain, USAF. "Intelligence and Intelligence Failures." for The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Medford, MA, 20 Mar 1995.

The paper reviews the importance of accurate intelligence for the crisis manager and the possible causes of breakdowns in the intelligence process that prevent the crisis manager from receiving the intelligence they need. The more common sources of intelligence failures are presented with special emphasis on the failures that occur in the analysis of intelligence. The conclusion drawn is that the human being is the weak link in the intelligence process. Emphasis on limiting the negative effects of human nature in the intelligence cycle will lead to the most benefits for crisis management.



## I. INTRODUCTION

Crises are a natural part of living affecting everyone from the individual to the nation-state, adding often unwanted excitement and spice to life. Accurate information is essential to deal with the crises that occur and is needed to make the proper decisions on how to resolve them favorably. This was stated by former Secretary of State Dean Rusk when he said, "Good policies can't be made without good information."<sup>1</sup> This paper intends to review one source of this information for U.S. decision makers, the intelligence community, and see how this intelligence is used in crisis management. Specific emphasis will be placed on the problem of "Intelligence Failures" which lead to poorly managed crises and what the possible causes of these failures are. Results will show that a large number of intelligence failures stem from the activity of humans in the intelligence process. The stakes involved in resolving crises at the international level are high, thus requiring the best possible information in order to deal with crises properly.

Information is essential to crisis management and required by senior level decision makers who create the policies which guide a nation. National decision makers need accurate information to be alerted to potential crises and then successfully manage them.<sup>2</sup> This is a fairly obvious statement. Basically, decision makers need to know what is going on in order

to develop the right policies to guide the nation. Therefor it is essential that the information presented to the decision makers is timely, accurate and relevant.

At this point it is necessary to narrow the scope of crises that will be dealt with in this paper. There are many different types of crises that a nation can encounter: economic, environmental, political, baseball strikes, natural disasters, social, foreign policy, etc.. National leaders need to respond to all of these crises. However, this paper will concentrate on foreign policy crises in order to look fully at the function of the U.S. intelligence community in international crisis management. Foreign policy crises are significant in this regard, because many of the organizations involved in intelligence collection cannot legally collect information within the U.S. against american citizens. In most circumstances it is against the law for organizations like the CIA, or the Department of Defense to gather information domestically although they may have excellent capabilities to do so.\* There are of course examples of illegal domestic activities by intelligence agencies that have been exposed and caused great scandal, such as the investigations in the 1970's that showed the CIA involved in activities considered by many beyond the CIA's charter.<sup>3</sup>

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\* An example that contradicts this is the use of U-2 Reconnaissance Aircraft to take pictures of areas devastated by natural disasters such as earthquakes in California or the recent flooding of the Mississippi. Technically this is "spying" domestically, but the information has become essential for proper disaster relief planning and the U-2 is the best source available of this information.

Therefore, non-domestic crises will be concentrated on in order to fully review the legal role of intelligence.

Foreign policy crises involve three basic criteria: First, there needs to be a threat to basic national values or interests. Otherwise there is little incentive to become involved. Second, a perceived finite time for response is necessary. Consequently the Cold War would not be considered a crisis, while the Cuban Missile Crisis was. Finally, a large probability for involvement of the military in hostilities is required.<sup>4</sup> The possibility of the U.S. being involved in foreign policy crises in the near future is extremely high. Looking forward, the CIA estimates that in the next two years the world can expect to see ethnic, religious or nationalistic conflict to occur in 30 countries.<sup>5</sup> It is likely that the U.S. will have to deal with a significant number of these conflicts. At a minimum, the national leaders must be aware of the situation and decide whether or not the U.S. should be involved at all. Intelligence plays a major role in providing pertinent information to make this decision.

Another term that needs to be refined for use in this paper is "information". Intelligence is simply a source of information. However, not all information required by a decision maker comes from intelligence. The policy maker needs a great deal more information to make a decision than that provided by the intelligence community. To develop effective policy options, a decision maker also needs to be informed on other factors that will restrict potential policy options. Factors such as what the

are U.S. capabilities in this situation, what will the mood of Congress or the American people be, what might be the legal constraints, etc. all impact on policy options. Each of these factors, and more, must figure into the decision making process. While a policy can fail due to a lack of information from intelligence sources, it can also fail because it is based on miscalculations of these other factors. While realizing the other factors are also important for the decision maker, this paper will concentrate on the information which comes from intelligence.

The ultimate goal of this paper is to see where the U.S. intelligence community has fallen short in providing accurate information to decision makers. If a crisis is poorly managed, or catches the country off guard, it is often blamed on an "Intelligence Failure". For example, the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor has been regarded by some researchers as an intelligence failure. Historians claim there was information collected by american intelligence which gave obvious indications that the Japanese were going to attempt an attack against the U.S.<sup>6\*</sup> Therefore, the U.S. should have known, and should have been prepared.

In order to see whether poorly managed crises are always

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\* Some historians claim the U.S. had ample warning of the impending japanese attack from such sources as intercepted japanese communications, British and Dutch intelligence, embassy reports out of Japan, and even radar intercepts of the incoming attacking aircraft. The U.S. had the information, but intelligence failed to use it properly, therefor there was an intelligence failure. (Levite, pp. 44)

caused by intelligence failures, it is necessary to review where the failure can occur. An intelligence failure must have its source somewhere in what is known as the Intelligence Cycle. This is the process by which information progresses from being collected to being used by decision makers to develop policies. In this paper the cycle has been condensed down into four basic steps: Collection - Analysis - Reporting - Use. If a failure during a crisis is due to intelligence, it will have to occur somewhere in this cycle.

The paper has been broken down into several sections. First, there will be a review of intelligence in general: specifically what intelligence is, what types of intelligence there are, sources, etc.. Next, it will be seen how intelligence fits into crisis management by answering four basic questions: What type of intelligence does the Policy Maker need? What are the means to collect this intelligence? What are the means available to analyze this intelligence and finally, What are the means available to get this intelligence to the consumer? The next section of the paper will concentrate on the intelligence cycle and examine where breakdowns occur in each of the four steps. The final section of the paper will then draw conclusions as to whether or not intelligence failures are always caused by the intelligence community and possible solutions to improve the intelligence system in the United States.

### Endnotes

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## II. REVIEW OF INTELLIGENCE

Accurate information is necessary for top level decision makers to guide the country in the policies that will best promote the national interest, especially in times of crisis. In foreign policy crises much of this knowledge comes in the form of "intelligence" about the other parties involved in the situation. A better way to define intelligence is that it is distilled knowledge about the events, trends and personalities that may affect the observer (person, nation) in some immediate or immediately foreseeable situation.<sup>1</sup> Intelligence is not just a bunch of facts for the decision maker, but rather analyzed information relevant to a specific situation that helps guide action.

At its most basic level intelligence is simply observing the activities of other actors to try and determine their capabilities and tendencies. It is an effort to "get to know" what the other side can do, how they act and how they think. If it is possible to have a good idea of how the other side operates, it is then possible to attempt to estimate what they will do in a given situation. For example, in the Persian Gulf War, Walter Lang was the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) analyst for the Middle East and South Asia. Iraq was part of the region he concentrated on, and he had become familiar with Iraqi army tactics. Because of this he was able to predict that the

Iraqis would invade Kuwait when he saw their forces deployed in their typical attack formation. He then warned the national decision makers of the impending attack.<sup>2</sup> \* Intelligence at its lowest level is a task of determining tendencies of others and using the information to predict their future actions.

There are several different categories of intelligence that are important to crisis management and each plays a different role. While separate, each category is complimentary to the others and relies on the others to a certain extent. The four basic categories are: Basic Intelligence, Strategic Intelligence, Indications and Warning, and finally, Current Intelligence.

Basic Intelligence is the least glamorous of the four, but it is also essential for each of the other categories of intelligence. It is best described as a database of information on various countries or subjects around the world. For a country it provides a wide variety of information that can be drawn on as background knowledge to produce the other categories of intelligence, or estimates. For example, it includes information on economic statistics, railroad timetables, maps, ethnic groups, governmental structure, building designs, possible targets, personality profiles, ideology, military equipment and tactics, etc.. It is similar to information you might see in an

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\* Walter Lang had watched Iraq for several years, and had seen how their armed forces fought in the 10 year Iran-Iraq War, observing typical tactics and the capabilities of various units. When he noticed the activities of the Iraqis on the border of Kuwait in the summer of 1990, he realized this was similar to activities of the Iraqis before mounting military attacks into Iran, and therefore predicted the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.



encyclopedia, and provides a picture of what the country is like and gives the analyst background needed to work with new information that is gathered. This information includes past actions of countries, so the analyst knows how the leadership tends to react in certain situations. This information can then be used to make predictions.<sup>3</sup> For example, in dealing with Panama under Noriega decision makers were briefed on his personality profile and where his political power base was so they could determine the best policy to pursue to remove him from power.<sup>4</sup> This information was derived from years of observation and was in the database of basic intelligence contained on Panama.

Strategic Intelligence is the next category that is of interest. Using information on the capabilities and past practices of another country, intelligence analysts make predictions of possible future activity. Strategic intelligence is used to formulate plans and policies at the national level.<sup>5</sup> It is presented in various types of reports, the most famous of which are the National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

If Strategic Intelligence attempts to give the long range prediction, the category of Indication and Warning (I&W) provides the notice that something will happen in the near future. I&W attempts to keep the country from being surprised by events in the world. Policy makers expect to be alerted on any crisis about to unfold in order to prepare and deal with it.<sup>6</sup> I&W

centers observe events around the world, but only the most vital areas can be watched all the time because there just are not enough resources to watch everything constantly.<sup>7</sup> An example of indications and warning was DIA analyst Walter Lang alerting the national decision makers of the activities of the Iraqi army. Imagery gave ample warning that the Iraqis were increasing strength on the Kuwaiti border and that something might happen, but exactly what the Iraqis planned to do was hard to determine.<sup>8</sup> Once I&W has discovered an area of concern, further intelligence collection efforts can be directed towards that area to get a more complete picture. The initial U-2 images of Soviet missiles in Cuba set off a large scale collection effort against the island to determine the full extent of Soviet missile activity there. Indications and Warning is refined by past successes and failures. What has occurred before helps to give clues of what to look for next time to predict specific events.<sup>9</sup> An example of this can again be seen in the Gulf War. Lessons learned from how Iraq deployed its forces on the Kuwaiti border and eventually invaded allowed the U.S. to warn the Saudis that Saddam Hussein was planning to also invade Saudi Arabia when imagery showed the Iraqi forces massing on the border of Saudi Arabia just as they had done before invading Kuwait.<sup>10</sup> This imagery was used to convince the Saudi King to allow the stationing of U.S. troops on his soil to prevent this invasion.<sup>11</sup>

The final category is Current Intelligence. This is the

source of information for the policy maker on unfolding events around the world. Indications and Warning give the initial information on problems, but it is current intelligence that gives the decision maker "news", keeping them up to date on events worldwide. It is very important that this information is responsive to the policy makers needs and desires.<sup>12</sup> It is no use wasting policy makers time telling them things they do not want to know.

These four categories of intelligence are derived from several basic sources of intelligence. Each source provides different kinds of information and all are used together to provide better awareness of the situation. The specific way of gathering the information is what differentiates the sources of intelligence.

Intelligence gathered from Human sources (HUMINT) is the oldest source of intelligence available. Thousands of years ago the Israelites sent 12 spies into the Promised Land to see what was there and report back to Moses. HUMINT is still a significant source of intelligence. Even with all of our modern technology, humans are often the only real source of the moods and intentions of the other side.<sup>13</sup> Considering this, Dean Rusk observed, "We knew the Soviets had the capabilities to invade Prague in 1968, the question was did they intend to - this could not be answered."<sup>14</sup> (emphasis mine). It is this bit of information on the intentions of the other side that is often needed, but lacking. During the Gulf War, the U.S. intelligence

community could describe in detail Iraqi military capabilities but what Saddam Hussein was planning to do with these capabilities was unknown. Everyone flunked the test when it came to know what Saddam Hussein was actually thinking.<sup>15</sup> This information on intentions that a decision maker needs in a crisis can be the most difficult to gather.<sup>16</sup>

The next source of intelligence provides a great deal of information and is often the easiest gather. Information that comes from "Open Sources" provides a significant amount of the data collected by the intelligence community.<sup>17</sup> This is information that is collected from sources that are not protected by a government. Typical sources include TV, newspapers, magazines, conferences, roadmaps, etc. Examples of this included observing Soviet Politburo members on the Kremlin Wall during May Day Celebrations to try and get an idea of the political relationships in the upper levels of the Communist Party. A modern example of this is watching the recent coverage of Boris Yeltsin's speech in parliament to gain insight into the Russian Presidents "health".<sup>18\*</sup> Dean Rusk estimated that 90% of the intelligence that went across his desk came from open sources.<sup>19</sup> While it does not seem as glamorous as "secret" intelligence, a great deal of important information can be determined from open sources.

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\* There are concerns in the U.S. government that Boris Yeltsin is alcoholic and getting worse, raising questions of his ability to govern effectively. There are reports of slurred speech and having to be supported by two aides during a speech in Kazakhstan. A recent CIA report on his "health" was leaked indicating intelligence community interest in this subject.

The next two sources of intelligence are much more technical in their collection processes. The first is Signals Intelligence (SIGINT). This is intelligence gained from gathering various electronic signals from another country including communications, radar, and electronic emissions. There is a huge effort to collect SIGINT that involves sizable amounts of money and resources.<sup>20</sup> The information it provides can include actual communications that have been decoded, the locations of radar sites, information on frequencies used, or tip offs on the location of units. Even the simple level and patterns of electronic emissions can reveal a great deal of information. For example, analysts look for a lull in electronic activity to indicate possible large-scale military activity is about to occur. This is based on the observation that electronic equipment is typically shutdown to do final maintenance before actual hostilities begin.

Imagery Intelligence (IMINT) is the last general source of information for the analyst and policy maker. Imagery does not always mean a photo, because there are other ways to produce images, i.e. using radar. However, producing a picture for the decision maker to look at somehow helps to make the situation more real. Imagery was used to first discover the Soviet missiles in Cuba that triggered the Cuban Missile Crisis, and later continued providing information as the crisis progressed.

No one source of intelligence is able to stand alone to provide the complete picture. Information gathered from one

source guides the intelligence community to collect more information from other sources. It is best to try and produce intelligence from "all source" collection, since each source of intelligence is complementary to the other.\*

The types and sources of intelligence have been reviewed, but this information must go through a cycle or system in order to transform raw data into distilled information that can be used by a policy maker. If an intelligence failure during a crisis is going to occur it must occur somewhere in the intelligence cycle: Collection - Analysis - Reporting - Use.

First, the information must be collected. Collection is the actual gathering of the information, using the various sources described above, and preparing the raw data to be presented to the analyst. Sometimes this information, if it is critical and requires little analysis, can go directly to the decision maker.<sup>21</sup>

Analysis is the second step. This is the making of the "distilled" information. The processed data is taken and combined with other information to develop an idea of what is going on. This is usually done by the analyst, but much of this work can be done with the aid of computers that crunch huge amounts of information to produce a more coherent view of all the data.

Once the information has been analyzed, someone must hear

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\* "All Source" intelligence is intelligence that does not rely on a single source for its information, but is made up of all available information (IMINT, SIGINT, HUMINT) in the effort to produce the most accurate picture possible.

about it. Reporting is the presenting of the distilled information to various consumers who can include other intelligence analysts, various decision makers and even the President.

Finally, the information must be used. Hopefully if the information is accurate, it can properly guide the actions of the consumers who have received it.

The cycle then repeats itself when the consumers of intelligence transmit their desires for what they want to know, and this guides further collection efforts.

Now that the basic concepts and ideas behind intelligence have been reviewed, it is time to see how intelligence fits into the problem of crisis management.

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### III. FOUR QUESTIONS

Having outlined some basic background concerning intelligence, now it is necessary to see how the gathered intelligence is used in crisis management by answering four questions:

1. What type of intelligence does the policy maker need?
2. What are the means available to collect this intelligence?
3. What are the means available to analyze this intelligence?
4. What are the means available to get this intelligence to the consumer?

#### 1. What type of intelligence does the Policy Maker need?

A former U.S. Secretary of State stated, "I don't know what kind of intelligence I need, but I will know it when I get it."<sup>1</sup> Accurate intelligence is an indispensable part of the information that a policy maker needs to effectively deal with a crisis. The decision maker needs to be presented with information in three general areas: First, capability of the other parties involved in the crisis. Second, goals and intentions of the other parties. Lastly, knowledge of the effect of your actions on the other parties.<sup>2</sup> Information on each of these is available from intelligence. While these are the general categories of information, the specific information needed during a crisis by the policy maker depends on the time factor. Policy makers need

different types of intelligence depending which crisis phase they are in: the Pre-crisis, Crisis, or Post Crisis phase.

#### Pre-crisis Phase

Before a crisis occurs, the decision maker wants to know, "What is going to happen?" The intelligence community needs to alert policy makers of potential problems before they occur. This hopefully will allow time for the country to prepare for and be ready to deal with the situation. When things work properly, such information would initially come from indications and warning intelligence. I&W centers continually watch trying to keep the next hot spot from surprising the U.S.. If something or someplace has been identified as a possible crisis, the decision maker is informed of the situation, which is then followed by current intelligence, updating them on how the situation is progressing.

#### Crisis Phase

As the situation evolves into a crisis, the decision maker wants to know, "What is going on, and where is this thing going?" From current intelligence the policy maker needs to receive information on the situation in order to make proper judgements of how to act and react as things develop. Now is the time when the decision maker wants to know not only what the other side is capable of doing, but also what they intend to do. What the other side is capable of doing is only important if they have the intention to do it.

At this point, it is also the responsibility of intelligence

to provide the decision makers information on how the other parties are reacting to american policies. Intelligence needs to determine if the other side is responding as expected to policy options initiated by the decision makers.<sup>3</sup> Intelligence provides an important feedback loop so that decision makers can evaluate how effective policies are and adjust them if necessary to get the desired response.

### Post Crisis

Finally, in the post-crisis arena, it is the responsibility of intelligence to monitor the disengagement. The decision maker's question here is, "Is it really over?". It is also necessary to evaluate crisis behavior, policy effectiveness and learn lessons from what happened and why.<sup>4</sup> This information is then used to improve intelligence and refine the crisis management skills of the decision makers.

## 2. What are the Means available to collect this intelligence?

The means of collecting the intelligence varies depending on the source of the intelligence, but basically falls into two areas, technical and non-technical means. The difference lies in the types of collectors used. Non-technical relies more on humans collecting the information, while technical means involve the use of systems like aircraft, listening posts and satellites. The United States has an advanced technical collection capability due to our high level of technology and the industrial base that is needed to develop and build these systems.

The technical systems are the main means of collecting Imagery and Signals Intelligence. Here there are a wide range of sophisticated platforms used to collect the raw data needed. The various systems and the specific information that is collected are highly classified in order to protect american capabilities. The strengths of technical intelligence are in its flexibility. The systems can often be positioned rapidly to monitor areas of interest and can do so without permission from the target. For example, when Iraq was beginning its buildup against Kuwait, various systems such as aircraft and satellites were redirected to gather as much information as possible on the situation, but no permission was needed from Iraq to do this.

As said before, non-technical collection means rely much more on humans as collectors of information. These sources include Human and Open Source Intelligence. HUMINT comes from many different sources, not only traditional spies or "moles", but also special operations forces, diplomats, immigrants, tourists, businessmen, etc.. Any eyewitness account can be used to improve the knowledge of the situation. It has been asserted that an Ambassador's primary mission is to feed his country intelligence.<sup>5</sup> Other diplomats are also a source of vital intelligence concerning the "moods and intentions" of the parties in a conflict. In the 1973 war, Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy allowed him to be in personal contact with various players in the crisis. These meetings provided information of not only what was communicated but also the mood of the various

parties, which would help in the crafting of policy options. In a more recent example, several months before the beginning of the Gulf War crisis, President Bush was briefed by the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. about a meeting with Saddam Hussein.<sup>6</sup> Bush learned not only what Hussein said, but also how he looked and was acting. This was all important information that could be used to determine what Saddam Hussein was planning to do. However, in retrospect it turned out that Saddam Hussein's intentions were wrongly interpreted.<sup>7</sup> This points out a major problem with HUMINT, the fact that the information it provides can often be ambiguous and interpreted incorrectly.<sup>8</sup>

The HUMINT sources which provide information from spies are not nearly as flexible as the technical sources used for IMINT and SIGINT, making it more difficult to respond to crises. Sources can take a long time to develop and be quickly wiped out with sudden change in events. The revolution in Iran against the Shah destroyed the CIA network developed in that country. Special Operations forces are much more flexible, in that they can quickly be prepared and inserted into the target country. They, however, are risky and rarely can provide the information on "moods and intentions" that is needed. This information can only come from highly placed informants.

To answer what are the means to collect the necessary intelligence, not only is it important to know how the information is collected, but it is important to understand who collects it and the size of the intelligence bureaucracy that is

involved. U.S. Intelligence is not a single entity, but rather is a "community" made up of many organizations, each with its own area of responsibility. This can lead to the types of problems that naturally come with trying to coordinate many different groups.

The intelligence community ultimately answers to the President. However, it is the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) that is the President's principal advisor on intelligence matters and is responsible for coordinating the activities of the intelligence community.<sup>9</sup> The DCI's problem is however, that he or she only has direct command over the Central Intelligence Agency not the rest of the community.<sup>10</sup> Underneath the DCI are the organizations involved in the collection of intelligence for the United States, each with its own particular responsibilities and political loyalties.

The responsibility to gather foreign intelligence involves a large number of agencies. Of these, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is probably the best known of the organizations that makes up the U.S. intelligence community. It produces coordinated all-source intelligence products and is the primary agency responsible for HUMINT activities. It also is the only agency authorized to conduct covert operations.<sup>11</sup>

The State Department responsibilities in dealing with foreign governments puts it into the position of being able to gather first hand information about another country. It is the agency responsible for the diplomatic intelligence gathering

efforts through its embassies and consulates and also produces intelligence important to the production of U.S. Foreign Policy.<sup>12</sup>

The Department of Treasury has a role of growing importance as the world becomes increasingly integrated economically. It is the agency responsible for producing intelligence related to U.S. foreign economic policy.<sup>13</sup>

The Department of Energy works with the State Department to produce non-clandestine intelligence related to foreign energy matters, with recent significance in the area of foreign nuclear energy programs.<sup>14</sup>

Law enforcement agencies also have intelligence functions. The Drug Enforcement Agency, as its name would suggest, is involved in watching the domestic and international drug trade.<sup>15</sup> The Federal Bureau of Investigation, while concentrating primarily on domestic law enforcement is also involved with the intelligence community in its counter intelligence efforts. It often must coordinate efforts with other intelligence agencies in the prosecution of its duties.<sup>16</sup> Concerning this, a lack of coordination between the CIA and FBI has been blamed as a major problem area keeping the Ames Spy Case from being uncovered earlier.<sup>17</sup>

The Department of Defense (DoD) is the final organization of importance in the intelligence community. Beneath its umbrella are various agencies that are responsible for the collection of military and military related intelligence.<sup>18</sup>

This type of intelligence is frequently crucial in the resolution of crises, so the DoD agencies often play an important supporting role in crisis management.

The first agency of importance is the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). It uses all-source intelligence to produce military intelligence for the Department of Defense. It also works with the CIA in the production of National Intelligence Estimates.<sup>19</sup> It was a DIA analyst who played a major role in alerting the national decision makers of a potential invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

Next, all Signals Intelligence responsibilities in the U.S. intelligence community have been assigned to the National Security Agency (NSA). This is the largest intelligence agency in the DoD and has extensive resources devoted to the collection and interpretation of electronic signals from around the world.<sup>20</sup> While it is a DoD agency, it provides SIGINT support to all organizations in the intelligence community in general.

Imagery intelligence for the entire U.S. intelligence community is controlled by the National Reconnaissance Office. It is their responsibility to provide timely imagery in response to intelligence community requirements.<sup>21</sup> Also dealing with imagery, the Central Imagery Office is a new organization responsible for interpreting imagery intelligence and furnishing this information to the intelligence community as a whole.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, each individual branch of the military has elements performing various intelligence functions to provide service



specific intelligence as needed by commanders.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. What are the means available to analyze this information?

At this point it is necessary to turn the collected facts into distilled knowledge. Raw data is generally useless to a policy maker in his decision making process, someone needs to tell him what it means. For example, at first the fact another nation has begun to play patriotic music on radio stations does not seem very important. However, when this is put into the context that patriotic music is always played before a major military engagement to motivate and prepare the populace, that is distilled knowledge the decision maker needs to know.

The analyst is the key here. The analyst is the person who can take bits of information, combine them with others and using their knowledge on the country develop a clear idea of events. The analyst needs good depth and experience in observing their area of responsibility.<sup>24</sup> Years of watching the Iraqis allowed DIA analyst Walter Lang to know which indicators to look for and how to examine the information he was receiving on the situation to predict what might occur next.<sup>25</sup> This is also the step in the process where "human nature" is most fully introduced. The problems that can stem from human nature will be discussed later in the paper.

Also, technology can play a large role in analysis. Computers, as they become more sophisticated, can often be used to help the analyst deal with large amounts of data. Computers

are able to quickly work through the huge amount of data that are constantly collected and if programmed with the proper models can also point out trends or important information.

However, computers are still just a tool for the analyst, and the human must step in eventually to be a control factor. For example, the U.S. and Canada are constantly on guard for possible nuclear attacks against North America. Computers collect and sift through the massive amounts of data looking for indications of a possible surprise attack. Humans however are still in the loop and verify the facts when the system says it detects an attack. A watch officer had the privilege of awaking NORAD's commanding general twice in two weeks to inform him that the Soviets had launched a massive nuclear attack, only to have to inform the general 10 minutes later that there was no attack, a computer chip had merely failed.<sup>26</sup>

Analysts must be able to separate the kernels of information from the chaff. It is often not a lack of information that is a problem, but being able to zero in on the important factors. For instance, in the weeks before the Korean Tree Cutting incident, the North Koreans gave many indications that they were getting ready to do something provocative. Their activities were similar to those before they shot down an EC-121\* and seized the USS

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\* An EC-121 Aircraft collecting intelligence off the coast of North Korea was shot down by the N. Koreans over the Sea of Japan with the loss of all 31 crew members. The N. Koreans claimed it was over their territory, while the U.S. maintained it was in international airspace. (Brecher, pp. 288)

Pueblo.\* However, these warning indicators were buried in the normal day to day irritations with which the North Koreans liked to provoke the U.S. and so were dismissed as insignificant.<sup>27</sup> Again it was only with hindsight that these indicators took on any importance.

4. What are the means available to get this intelligence  
to the consumer?

Once the information has been gathered and analyzed, it needs to be given to the policy makers in order to be of any use. A way must be in place to communicate this information to the users who need it. How the information is presented depends on several factors such as time, the type of intelligence, and personal preference. Strategic intelligence estimates are usually presented in reports or briefings. Current Intelligence comes in many forms from briefings and short memos to personal meetings. Highly urgent information could come via message, or phone call. As Secretary of State, Deans Rusk commented that throughout the day he received intelligence through briefings, reports, little notes and verbally all keeping him informed on events worldwide.<sup>28</sup> Large amounts of money have been spent to insure that the national decision makers have sufficient communications networks to deal with crises and modern technology

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\* The USS Pueblo was an U.S. Navy intelligence gathering ship seized on January 22, 1968 by North Korea for allegedly entering N. Korean Territorial waters. The crew was in the custody of the North Koreans before the U.S. could respond. A crisis was set off that lasted until December 23, 1968 when the crew was released. (Brecher, pp. 281)

has made it even easier to keep leaders well informed.

Communications can be the key link in getting the proper amount of information to the decision makers. As said before the decision makers need to have an idea of what is going on in order to develop the best possible policy options. The benefits that can be achieved by having in-place communications instead of trying to put something together quickly can be shown by comparing two crises in the Ford Administration, the Mayaguez Crisis\* and the Korean Tree Cutting Incident.\*\* In the Mayaguez crisis the Administration was unable to get an accurate picture of what was happening due to a lack of an established U.S. presence in the area. Because of this shortcoming there was a lack of communications and intelligence collection capability. Brent Scowcroft commented, "We didn't have the foggiest idea of what was going on."<sup>29</sup> Poor communications was a major factor in how badly this crisis was resolved.

This compares to the Korean tree cutting incident. In South Korea the U.S. had and still has forces and extensive communication capabilities. The President was able to be informed of what had happened and what was going on. Because of

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\* The Mayaguez Crisis, 12-15 May 1975, involved the seizure of an american merchant vessel off of Cambodia. The U.S. mounted a rescue operation in which 38 americans were killed trying to free the crew from an island where they were believed to be held based on poor information. The crew was not on that island and had already been released by the Cambodians from another location before the assault began.

\*\* Tree Cutting Incident, 17-20 Aug 1976, Two american officers were killed by North Koreans while trimming trees in the Joint Security Area of the DMZ. In response, the U.S. went on heightened military alert. The crisis ended when a reenforced work party completely removed the tree and two illegal road blocks without reaction by the N. Koreans.

the good communications in place, President Ford was able to effectively bring an end to this crisis. He knew what was going on.

Finally, crisis management occurs in an atmosphere of time constraints. A perceived constraint of the time to react was one of the characteristics of a crisis described in the beginning of this paper. The fact that events usually unfold so quickly is a major check on the policy maker and intelligence officials alike. Many of the failures during a crisis are made worse by time pressures with policy makers often having to make decisions based on scanty information without the time to get more facts because the pace of events will not allow it.<sup>30</sup> The crises from the Ford Administration provide excellent examples of how time pressures can affect crisis management. President Ford was affected by the time factor in the Mayaguez Crisis and the Korean Tree Cutting Incident. During the Mayaguez crisis he realized that he didn't have the luxury of a lot of time. Experience from a similar event, the seizure of the USS Pueblo had shown that if a crisis like this was not quickly dealt with, it could become difficult and drawn out. The President felt he had to act quickly without being able to get a complete picture of what was happening to keep the situation from deteriorating further. This was one reason that there was such a lack of information, there was believed to be insufficient time to collect more.<sup>31</sup> However, the Korean incident was different in that he had the luxury of time. Once the President had the initial facts

surrounding the incident, he saw that there would not be any benefit to reacting quickly. He had the opportunity to take his time to decide what to do, plan and respond to the situation.<sup>32</sup>

Crises are a severe test of the intelligence capabilities of a nation. Decision makers need information quickly in circumstances that are often less than ideal. The next section will review the major sources of intelligence failures.

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#### IV. SOURCES OF INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

Breakdowns in the intelligence cycle occur and these failures have a negative impact on the proper resolution of crises. To resolve a crisis quickly and effectively the policy maker needs to have the best information possible to provide awareness of the complete situation. A significant source of this information for the policy maker is the intelligence community. When the intelligence community fails to provide this necessary information, an "intelligence failure" occurs. This section will review the major problems that arise in the intelligence cycle that may lead to these failures.

Before going into the actual cycle to find problem areas it is important to point out cases that are incorrectly labeled as intelligence failures. The first case is when actions are classified as an intelligence failure without all the facts being known. The second is based on the assumption that the intelligence community should know everything and not be surprised by events.

In the first case, it is necessary to know all the facts surrounding an event before it can be judged to be an intelligence failure. A policy may be critiqued as a failure without all the relevant facts being known by those criticizing the action. An example of this occurred in dealing with Panama



during the Noriega regime. Pressure was building in the U.S. to do something to remove Noriega as dictator in Panama. During this time, U.S. forces in the country received information through HUMINT sources that a coup was going to be attempted against Noriega and U.S. involvement was requested by the coup planners to help them succeed.<sup>1</sup> National decision makers received this information and other intelligence on the situation. After review, it was decided that the coup was either a trap set up by Noriega to embarrass the U.S., or simply so poorly planned that it would fail even with U.S. support.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the U.S. adopted a policy of wait and see concerning the coup because the Administration did not think it was a risk worth taking. Several days later, the coup was attempted and failed because it had been poorly planned. This showed that the proper policy had been adopted. However, when the reports of the failed coup and lack of American involvement reached the U.S., accusations of an intelligence and policy failure were voiced.<sup>3</sup> Critics claimed that the U.S. had possessed a chance to get rid of the dictator, but had blown it because of bad intelligence and poor policy. Many claimed that the U.S. should have been involved in supporting the coup, and had the U.S. been involved, the coup would have succeeded.<sup>4</sup> However, this criticism was based on an incomplete review of the facts. The coup was poorly planned and likely to fail, so the decision to not be involved was correct. Nevertheless, those who only had some of the facts declared that the U.S. had failed to capitalize on a golden

opportunity.<sup>5</sup>

The second case that is not an intelligence failure stems from the assumption of "should have known", or the hindsight bias. When an event occurs that surprises the United States the critique surfaces that the intelligence community "should have known", and therefor an intelligence failure has occurred. The reality is that not all events can be predicted, nor can all areas of the world be watched with equal intensity. Events will surprise the U.S. no matter how much money is spent on intelligence.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes the intelligence community even had the information available which would have indicated that something was going to happen, however, it is only in hindsight that the information that was available then can be analyzed properly. This is known as the hindsight bias, in that hindsight is always 20/20. The information that is obviously important once events have unfolded is actually never collected or buried in a maze of "noise" and deception before the crisis occurs.<sup>7</sup> For example, after the Falkland Islands War it was obvious that the warning signals were available to the British pointing towards an invasion, but they were only obvious in retrospect after Argentineans had actually invaded the islands.<sup>8</sup> It was only with this background that the warning signals were able to be seen. Sometimes the intelligence community "should have known" and this is a failure on the part of intelligence. However, the hindsight bias always needs to be weighed to see, if in the situation present at the time, the information was

available and could reasonably have been expected to have been detected.

Once these two instances are removed, it is possible to see where breakdowns in the intelligence cycle can occur which lead to intelligence failures.

### Failures Due to Collection

The first step in the process that can lead to intelligence failures is collection. Collection is the essential first step in the cycle. If the information is not gathered in the first place then the rest of the cycle cannot be engaged to bring the information to the policy makers. Failures in collecting the intelligence will lead to an intelligence failure if it is reasonable to expect that the information should have been collected in the first place. Collection failures may be due to several reasons.

The first cause of failures is a lack of flexibility in the intelligence collectors themselves. Flexibility is required in two areas. First, flexibility means being able to get assets into the crisis area to collect the information and secondly, that the collectors are able to collect the information necessary.

Since collection systems cannot be everywhere all the time, they must have the ability to respond to situations and observe areas of importance. Because of a lack of collection assets in the crisis area, as the crisis begins to unfold the intelligence

available to the decision maker is often sketchy or even wrong. It takes time to get a better picture of what is happening as systems become dedicated to the area and the information begins to flow in.<sup>9</sup> A lack of this type of flexibility is highlighted in the Mayaguez case. One of the first decisions was to launch a reconnaissance aircraft to the area to see what was happening.<sup>10</sup> However, the collection effort throughout the crisis was less than adequate. During this crisis Brent Scowcroft complained that the Administration didn't have the "foggiest idea" of what was occurring.<sup>11</sup> This was due in part to the fact that the U.S. did not have collectors in the area that could respond quickly and effectively enough to gather the necessary information. This inability led to confusing reports on actual locations of the ship and crew and finally poor intelligence on the strength of forces that occupied the island which was eventually attacked by U.S. Marines. The numerous contradictory intelligence reports led to a further problem of having President Ford begin to question the validity of any intelligence he was receiving.<sup>12</sup>

An example of the second problem with flexibility occurred during the Persian Gulf War when General Schwarzkopf, in charge of the forces countering the Iraqi Army, complained that the intelligence collectors supporting him were more attuned to national tasking than they were to theater requirements.<sup>13</sup> The national assets were not flexible enough to adjust to the needs of a theater commander since they had been designed to collect against the Soviet threat, not the needs of a theater war.

Lack of flexibility in collection is not due to an inability by the U.S. to build the systems needed. The U.S. has a highly advanced industrial base that is able to build the necessary systems, it is a question of money and guidance. Collection is becoming more and more complex and the ability to protect information from observation is becoming more common. This leads to ever increasing costs and difficulties in collection. As it is easier to protect information, the systems needed to collect it must become more sophisticated, which means they cost more, thus limiting the number which can be purchased.<sup>14</sup> This then leads to a fight over limited collection resources and whose collection requests get priority.<sup>15</sup> The question becomes what type of collector should be built and what information should be collected. While the U.S. has advanced abilities to collect, due to costs, the number of collectors that can be built is dropping, while at the same time the number of potential targets is increasing.<sup>16</sup> During the Cold War the primary opponent was the Soviet Union, this fact guided the intelligence and budget process in what should be collected and how new systems needed to be designed. With the end of the Cold War, there has been an explosion in the number of areas that require surveillance, such as Bosnia, Rwanda, Haiti, Drug Trafficking, Regional Conventional Wars, Border Disputes, International Crime, Weapons Transfers, etc.. Collection systems need to be designed and built to gather the information necessary to successfully deal with the varied crises of the future. Intelligence needs the flexibility to

collect in all these areas. Nevertheless, new systems can only be designed and built if the future requirements are known. Some idea of future requirements is needed to design the systems to respond to crises.

The next cause of intelligence failures comes from the increasing sophistication of the collectors themselves. Often, too much information is gathered and it cannot be processed in a timely manner. Before the 1973 Arab-Israeli War the U.S. had collected a sizable amount of SIGINT on the Egyptians, but was unable to process and analyze it all because of the sheer volume gathered.<sup>17</sup> The amount of information that is collected daily is incredible, and is likely to contain the needed information.<sup>18</sup> However, sometimes the important information gets lost in the sea of data that has been gathered.

#### Failures Due to Analysis

The next step in the intelligence cycle introduces the element of human nature which then causes failures due to inaccurate analysis. Analysis ultimately requires human judgement in deciding which bits of information are important and what all the information means. Failures in analysis can occur for several reasons.

First, just as two doctors can come up with different diagnoses from the same set of symptoms, so can analysis often point to several different possibilities depending upon how the facts are viewed. For example, General Schwartzkopf complained

that the analysts in Washington D.C. and his theater analysis couldn't agree on assessments concerning Iraq raising the question of who was correct.<sup>19</sup> Also, the ambiguity of the information may make analysis extremely difficult. Often the information that is collected is contradictory, as in the case of Iraq invading Kuwait. Initially, all the facts did not point towards a single conclusion. Although the imagery showed that the Iraqi combat forces were deployed in preparation for attack into Kuwait, not all of the required secondary forces were in place to support an invasion.<sup>20</sup> So it seemed that while the Iraqis may have wanted to attack, they did not have the proper force mix to attempt an invasion. If they were not going to invade, what did they intend to do? DIA analyst Walter Lang briefed national decision makers of these inconsistencies and stated he believed that an invasion would occur.<sup>21</sup> However, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell and Central Command Commander General Norman Schwarzkopf both believed that the information available indicated that the deployment of Iraqi forces was just a show of force to persuade the Kuwaitis to resolve an ongoing political dispute.<sup>22</sup> This estimate, however, was not completely supported by the intelligence available. First of all, the Kuwaitis did not have any real way of detecting the force on their border and therefore it would not make a very effective tool of persuasion. Secondly, the force seemed unreasonably large for the objective of simply applying political pressure.<sup>23</sup> This ambiguity in the

information available continued for several days with many senior level American policy makers believing that the crisis would resolve itself quietly.<sup>24</sup> It was not until approximately twenty four hours before the actual invasion that the Iraqi forces were at full strength with the necessary secondary units and unmistakably deployed for attack that the DIA analyst was able to say the Iraqis would attack. Even at that point, many believed that the attack would not come because it just did not make sense.<sup>25</sup> \*

The second possible cause of intelligence failures comes from the problem of mirror imaging. This is the mistake of believing the opponent views the situation and thinks as you do. In the Iraqi case outlined above, many believed that Saddam Hussein would not attack because, "It just didn't make sense", at least not to western military thinkers.<sup>26</sup> This is a classic mistake and can lead to incorrect intelligence estimates. Another example of mirror imaging occurred with nuclear deterrence arguments over the merits of the Mutual Assured Destruction versus the War-Fighting Strategies promoted during the Cold War. These debates and theories of behavior drove the U.S. nuclear program during much of the Cold War. Both sides assumed that the Soviets viewed deterrence just as the U.S. did

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\* An interesting side note is the question whether, considering the circumstance at that time, the U.S. could have pursued a policy that would have prevented Saddam Hussein from ordering the invasion. What could the U.S. realistically have done, even if it had significant, unambiguous warning of an invasion, that would have stopped the attack since later, Saddam Hussein did not back down even when faced by the massive coalition army.



and would react to American nuclear postures as predicted in these theories. Time showed that the Soviets thought both strategies were dangerous and had been following their own plans regardless of what the American strategists thought "made sense".

Nonetheless, mirror imaging can be of some benefit when it gives the analyst a frame of reference. For example, often the best person to observe Soviet ICBM developments is someone who had experience with the American nuclear program. They have extensive background in the subject and can analyze activities because they understand how things function.<sup>27</sup> Another common example is a former quarterback being an announcer during a football game. His experience helps him analyze what is happening on the field because he has been there and understands better what the quarterback on the field is thinking.

Intelligence failures can also stem from a problem similar to mirror imaging which is basing analysis on false assumptions and preconceptions. This is a problem that affects both analysts and decision makers alike. Individuals naturally develop assumptions and preconceptions to help them organize the information they have and analyze what is happening around them. Information that does not fit into these ideas is then rejected as false.<sup>28</sup> Intelligence analysts do the same thing when dealing with the data they receive. False assumptions, or assumptions that are not periodically revised, can lead to serious miscalculations. An example of this is the Germans during World War II being wrong in their belief of where the

Allies were going to land in France. Once the Germans had made up their minds, any information that pointed to the correct location of Normandy was rejected as false because it did not fit into their belief of what was going to happen.<sup>29</sup> In the 1970's, Egyptian President Sadat warned President Carter that the Shah of Iran was in serious trouble and in danger of being ousted from power. This information was rejected by American policy makers because it also did not fit into the accepted preconception of the strength of the Shah.<sup>30</sup>

Another source of intelligence failure is the increased complexity of the world and the analysis required to understand it. The analyst must now look at many more variables than in the past to be able to predict events. Not only is the military factor important in a crisis, but now also ethnic problems, history, strategic location, rise of nationalism, interdependence of economies, religion, resources and many other variables.<sup>31</sup> All these factors work together and must be considered to predict events accurately. Success in analysis used to be based on which side had better information. Now it relies on assumptions and logic of complex models that try to categorize large amounts of information and consider the interaction of numerous variables.<sup>32</sup>

These have been weaknesses that individual humans bring into the analytical process which leads to intelligence failures. However, the organizations involved in intelligence gathering can also suffer from problems that stem from human nature.

The first problem comes from a lack of sharing the necessary information between offices or organizations. Due to the need for secrecy in intelligence, information is often not shared outside a specific group of "cleared" individuals. Compartmentalization of activities designed to protect secrets from exposure also impedes the sharing of this same information with others who need it.<sup>33</sup> For example, during the Bay of Pigs operation the group planning the attack had a more optimistic assessment of the situation in Cuba than warranted because certain information was not passed between offices. The effort to maintain as much secrecy in organizing the operation as possible kept the planners from receiving the information which was available, and the office that had the information was unaware of the planning going on.<sup>34</sup>

Another source of intelligence failures in groups is due to Institutional Bias. Institutional bias is a problem that is similar to individuals having false assumptions and preconceptions except on a broader level. Organizations often have specific ways of doing things or thinking - a set of "acceptable" behaviors. Individuals entering an organization are quickly indoctrinated into how the office thinks, and new people are rarely willing to rock the boat, or challenge the standing assumptions for fear of damaging their career.<sup>35</sup> This problem of following the "party line" is also found in the intelligence community. Over one half of the respondents to a CIA task force survey said that forcing a product to conform to a view held by

superiors occurred often enough to be a concern.<sup>36</sup> In the 1970's critics claimed that the National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) coming out of the CIA were incorrect due to institutional bias that clouded the analysis. The famous A Team/B Team concept was established to test out this critique. The A Team came from the normal NIE organizations while the B Team was staffed with "hawkish" people independent from the normal NIE organization, and therefor unaffected by institutional biases in the CIA. The B Team worked off the same intelligence information as the A Team, however, they developed a much different intelligence estimate.<sup>37</sup> Upon further investigation it was determined that the independent group was much closer to the truth than was the CIA group, because they were not influenced by false institutional biases.<sup>38</sup>

Another source of intelligence failures is having an organization which has morale or stability problems. Organizations work best when they have stability.<sup>39</sup> The intelligence community, is being presently shaken by the controversy over the future of intelligence. Efforts are underway to streamline the intelligence process and redirect its efforts away from the Cold War paradigm it used for 40 years. This speculation of changing the organization of the intelligence community is unsettling to those working in intelligence.<sup>40</sup> An individual's morale goes down when they begin to question their job security and what the future might hold. As their morale drops so does the quality of their output.<sup>41</sup> Presently, the CIA

is in turmoil due to possible restructuring and also the Ames Spy Scandal. This scandal has badly shaken the morale and standing of the CIA, and it will be the difficult job of the new Director of the CIA to bring the organization through this period.<sup>42</sup>

Another source of intelligence failures is due to the number of actors in the intelligence community. Coordination of the many agencies in the production of intelligence estimates can lead to significant problems. One of the biggest complaints from General Schwartzkopf during the Gulf War was the extensive use of disclaimers that rendered the intelligence estimates he received useless.<sup>43</sup> This was due to the coordination process that intelligence products must go through in order to be produced. The problems comes from having to reconcile the various views of the agencies or analysts involved in producing the intelligence estimate.<sup>44</sup> The lowest common denominator is found that all the offices or agencies can agree upon which generally means an estimate that says little or is filled with disclaimers.<sup>45</sup>

Since intelligence is such a large bureaucracy, another source of intelligence failures is due to the typical problems inherent in bureaucracies. These problems include red tape and infighting.

As in any large organization the bureaucracy can often take maddeningly long to do its job, and be bogged down by large amounts of red tape.<sup>46</sup> Coordinating efforts between the various organizations can take an incredibly long time, which is not available during a crisis.

Also, bureaucracies can spend a great deal of time and energy fighting over "turf", or trying to get control of scarce budget money and other resources. It is not unusual for each agency to try and "sell" its specific intelligence product to decision makers in order to bolster their organizations importance at the expense of the others.<sup>47</sup> Bureaucratic rivalries can also impede sound intelligence actions, such as when, according to former DCI Stansfield Turner, the CIA showed little interest in NSA information that indicated a Soviet Combat Brigade in Cuba in 1978. This significant intelligence was "ignored" by the other agencies because they had been scooped by NSA and did not want to look bad.<sup>48</sup> The other organizations acted in typical bureaucratic fashion when they should have made a coordinated effort to collect more information about what was happening in Cuba.

#### Failures Due to Reporting

The breakdown in communication between the intelligence analysis and the policy maker can be a major source of problems.<sup>49</sup> It is not much use to have the intelligence if it does not get to the person who needs to have it.

One source of reporting failures takes place when communications channels become clogged with increased communication demands during crises.<sup>50</sup> During a crisis it is not unusual for numerous ad hoc committees to be formed throughout the government to deal with the crisis, in addition to

the normal organizations that must respond to the situation. All of these groups trying to do their job can clog the communications system by simply overloading it. Information is then not passed along in a timely fashion.

Along those lines, the sheer volume of information that is gathered on the crisis area can slow the system down, especially if good communications networks are not already in place.<sup>51</sup> As already seen, a crisis in Korea is somewhat easier to deal with than one in a remote corner of the world because the communications systems are robust and already in place.

Additionally, failures can occur if systems are incompatible and incapable of talking amongst themselves. General Schwartzkopf had the critique that there was extreme difficulty sharing intelligence between non-compatible systems.<sup>52</sup> Systems may have the necessary information, but if it is not shared a complete picture cannot be developed.

A final source of failure in communications is due to a lengthy chain of command causing delays. Each bureaucratic level that has to look at and pass on vital information takes precious time. This happens at each higher level until the information reaches a point where it can be acted upon.<sup>53</sup> For example, the initial messages that the USS Pueblo was in trouble took two hours to get to the proper decision makers due to the chain of command. At that point it was too late to do anything to prevent the crisis.<sup>54</sup>

### Failures Due to Use

The last step of the intelligence cycle where breakdowns occur is in the actual use of the intelligence by the decision makers. However, a failure by policy makers to use the intelligence provided does not constitute an "intelligence failure"<sup>55</sup> Walter Laqueur stated, "Knowledge, if it does not determine action, is dead to us."<sup>56</sup> A failure due to a breakdown in this step of the intelligence cycle cannot be blamed on the intelligence community. Although part of the intelligence cycle, failures at this point are actually policy failures. Nonetheless, it is still informative to see where the problems in this portion of the cycle occur.

The first problem in the use of intelligence stems from the relationship between the decision maker and analyst. The analysts needs to be close enough to the decision maker to get guidance in what is needed and have an idea of what policy options are being considered, but at the same time, they need to stay far enough away to be able to give independent judgements.<sup>57</sup> Problems surface if there is too close a link between the two, and pressure is applied to the analyst to provide only the estimates which agree with certain policies.<sup>58</sup> For example, there is evidence that during the Vietnam War enemy troop strengths were under-reported so as to not upset the policy makers in Washington D.C.<sup>59</sup> There also is the case of the CIA analyst who quit rather than rewrite an estimate that was critical of a Reagan Administration policy in Central America.<sup>60</sup>



Another source of failure is when the policy maker is too busy with other things to worry about information that does not directly impact what is happening day to day. While the intelligence community may be warning of potential hot spots, this information only becomes important when a crisis is no longer avoidable.<sup>61</sup> For example, the 1974 invasion of Cyprus by Turkey surprised the Ford Administration largely because it was too busy with the Nixon resignation and other U.S. domestic problems to deal effectively with the foreign policy situation until it had to.<sup>62</sup>

Along the same lines, intelligence estimates are often disregarded by policy makers. Policy makers like to see the information themselves and become their own analysts which can be seen in the Gulf War example.<sup>63</sup> Although the DIA analyst predicted that the Iraqis would attack, senior decision makers took the information and came up with their own assessment of the situation. Also, intelligence not viewed in context can badly influence decisions. There is a tendency by decision makers during a crisis to want to see the raw intelligence with the feeling that the newest intelligence on a situation must be better, more correct, more secret and supersedes that which preceded it.<sup>64</sup> This can obviously cause serious problems.

The attitude of the policy maker can have a significant impact on how the intelligence is received and used. As Secretary of State, Dean Rusk thought the product he was getting was good and had praises for intelligence.<sup>65</sup> Whereas William

Odom, a former official at the National Security Council, had the opinion that CIA did not have a good grip on reality and that no one really read the estimates produced by the CIA. He went on to comment that most of the people he knew received their intelligence from the newspaper.<sup>66</sup> Attitudes have a significant impact on how intelligence is used.

Policy makers need to develop a trust and understanding of the intelligence community that serves them. During the Mayaguez crisis the poor intelligence that President Ford was receiving damaged this relationship and consequently hurt the credibility of future reports he received from intelligence.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, during World War II Admiral Nimitz was able to develop an understanding of the "new" intelligence he was receiving from intercepted communications.\* Over several months the Admiral was able to learn to put some trust in this source and the people working for him. This allowed him to plan the campaign at Midway and surprise the Japanese Fleet, winning a great victory.<sup>68</sup> Part of the Japanese plans to attack Midway included an attack on the Aleutian Islands. Nimitz informed the commander of the Aleutian forces where the Japanese planned to attack, but did not reveal the source of the information. This commander had not learned the reliability of this intelligence and so disregarded Nimitz's instructions and placed his forces in another area to counter the Japanese, and in doing so missed the Japanese

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\* The U.S. intelligence community had broken the Japanese codes to determine war plans. This recent development was kept very secret so that the Japanese would not change their encryption system. (Levite, pp. 116)

attack.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, failures in decision making during crises can stem from a lack of experience in dealing with crises. Often the senior policy makers are the least experienced in dealing with crises, since they are elected or appointed into positions for relatively short periods of time. The institutional memory and skills of how to handle crises then comes from the intelligence community and other government organizations.<sup>70</sup> Whether this experience is accepted depends upon the personality of the decision maker.

This section has reviewed the major sources of intelligence failures in the cycle. The next section will determine where most of the problems come from.

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## V. THE CAUSES OF INTELLIGENCE FAILURES

The term "intelligence failure" is often loosely and incorrectly applied to any crisis that does not end well.<sup>1</sup> As has been seen, if the failure is indeed due to intelligence the reason for the failure must occur somewhere in the intelligence cycle. The last section reviewed the more common sources of breakdowns that can occur in the cycle, all of which could lead to a failure in properly dealing with a crisis. However, the term is too loosely applied to every event that does not go as well as it should for the U.S.. Excessive hopes have been placed on intelligence's ability to collect the information desired by consumers.<sup>2</sup> After review it will be seen that most intelligence failures are due to human nature.

Concerning collection, it can be argued that the U.S. has the most advanced collection system in the world. Indeed sometimes the problem is too much information being gathered rather than not enough. If the required information is not being gathered, it is likely that the U.S. could develop a system that could provide the information desired. It then becomes a question of budget priorities in this area, with some information simply costing too much to collect. The United States will never be able to collect all the information necessary, or that is desired. Even with the massive intelligence effort against Iraq during the Gulf War, the U.S. underestimated the Iraqi Weapons of

Mass Destruction efforts that were underway.<sup>3</sup> It also proved extremely difficult to find the Scud Missile launchers, despite a enormous effort. Ultimately the U.S. never really was able to find out what Saddam Hussein was thinking.

Therefor concerning collection, the U.S. has possibly the best systems in the world. There are arguments that the U.S. has emphasized technical means to the detriment of HUMINT, which provides the all important "intentions" information needed by decision makers. However, in general the U.S. is doing well. It is rarely intelligence collection failures that are a problem.

The second area in the intelligence cycle that can cause failures is Reporting. The U.S. has a highly advanced communications system that is constantly being upgraded with efforts towards improving the reporting ability. During the Reagan Presidency the National Security Council was upgraded with advanced computerized information processing systems to better present the information to the decision makers, and the CIA is presently upgrading its satellite network in order to deal with a smaller budget but still handle the volume of information necessary.<sup>4</sup> The failures due to reporting come mainly from human nature with its interaction/reaction weaknesses that generally cannot be solved by better technical systems.

Third, problems with the use of intelligence cannot rightfully be label intelligence failures. If a crisis is poorly managed because of an improper use of good intelligence, then the failure cannot be blamed on intelligence, but rather is the fault



of the policy maker<sup>5</sup> This cannot constitute an intelligence failure, but rather it is a policy failure.

This leaves the analysis portion of the intelligence cycle as the major source of intelligence failures where improvements can occur. As reviewed in the last section, human nature introduces many problems and seems to be the cause of a large number of intelligence failures. Improvements in the analysis portion of the intelligence cycle must come through dealing with the problems stemming from human nature. Possible ways of improving the situation are outlined in the next section.

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## VI. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

To correct possible sources of intelligence failures three areas need attention: Guidance, Flexibility and Human Nature.

The first area that can be improved upon is guidance. Guidance answers the question of what intelligence will be necessary in the Post Cold War world. A new world paradigm needs to be developed that will guide the intelligence community in what information will be necessary in the future and outline who the "enemy" is. This guidance will help direct technical efforts in designing the necessary collection systems as well as a reorganization of the intelligence community to best be able to provide the necessary information.

In an attempt to answer this need for guidance, the U.S. intelligence community is presently undergoing an intense year-long review of its roles and missions in the Post Cold War world. This review, directed by the President and mandated by Congress, is tasked to give U.S. intelligence a blueprint of the future.<sup>1</sup> The danger here is that a lack of a meaningful review will cause more problems for intelligence.<sup>2</sup> If the world is fundamentally changed, then the intelligence community must be reorganized to deal with this change and not be put through some politically motivated minor adjustment.

Concerning flexibility, whatever the Post Cold War World

will be like, the U.S. needs to maintain and develop a flexible intelligence capability to deal with crises wherever they occur. There may have been doubts of Saddam Hussein's actual thoughts during the Gulf War, but most of his actions were detected by the intelligence effort dedicated to the area.<sup>3</sup> In the short term, the American military is working on maintaining its tactical reconnaissance capabilities and other collection capabilities to deal with the next crisis.<sup>4</sup> In the long term, the U.S. is looking to develop new systems and technologies to collect information previously unavailable to resolve future crises. Systems must be developed that collect the necessary information and at the same time are able to quickly respond to areas around the globe. This will mean a high degree of flexibility to deal with crises across the spectrum of conflict.

Human nature is the third source of difficulties and seems to cause a majority of the intelligence failures. Therefore addressing this problem may be the area of greatest potential return. It is unlikely that human nature can be changed, but its negative effects can be realized and minimized. The intelligence community as it is organized today was developed to deal with the Cold War, a threat that no longer exists. Organizational restructuring may help some of these problems, but these must be guided by the intelligence needs that will determine what the new world order is. However, organizational changes only go part way towards minimizing intelligence failures. The best long-term solution towards resolving the many problems due to human nature

is to put the best people possible into key positions.<sup>5</sup> Dedicated, motivated people doing the best job they can goes a long way toward producing the accurate intelligence that is needed.

Finally, Crisis Simulation Exercises would also help address some failures in the use of intelligence. Exercises would give the new policy makers practice at dealing with a crisis, and help develop the important link between the Intelligence Analyst and the Policy Maker, giving both necessary experience.<sup>6</sup> Each needs to have an idea of the other's world so as to be able to work more effectively together

In the end analysis, the intelligence system in the U.S. has a good track record.<sup>7</sup> However, things can always be improved. Intelligence is becoming ever increasingly important as the world is becoming more dynamic. While the need to forecast future developments has never changed, old ways of looking at the world are no longer effective. Intelligence needs to be the eyes, ears and crystal ball of the policy maker in order for them to guide the nation through the crises that are sure to occur in the future.

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### GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

CIA - Central Intelligence Agency  
DCI - Director of Central Intelligence  
DIA - Defense Intelligence Agency under the DoD  
DoD - Department of Defense  
HUMINT - Human Intelligence  
I&W - Indications and Warning  
IMINT - Imagery Intelligence  
NIE - National Intelligence Estimate  
NORAD - North American Air Defense Command  
NSC - National Security Council  
SIGINT - Signals Intelligence  
WMD - Weapons of Mass Destruction

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